

SECRET LANGUAGE

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When I was quite young, I was frequently mystified by the older kids speaking a secret language. It didn't take me too long to unravel the secret, and soon I was speaking Pig Latin (or Igpay Atinlay) with the best of them.

But speaking in a secret language wasn't much fun when practically everyone, including grown-ups, was in on the secret.

However, in those days there was another secret language making the rounds. In theory, it is as simple as Pig Latin, but speaking and understanding it was more difficult. In fact, only a half-dozen of us ever mastered it. It gave us a fine feeling to carry on a secret conversation in the presence of our peers.

How did this secret language work? First, you break up your speech into syllables, either CVC, CV or VC (where C stands for a consonant and V stands for a vowel). The syllables are then pronounced CEE-A-SVC, CEE-A-SV, or EE-A-SVC. "Can you talk like this?" becomes "Kee-a-san yee-a-soo tee-a-salk lee-a-sike thee-a-sis?". Admittedly, it's something of a tang-toungler.

We called this secret language "Carney Hash" or "Kee-a-sar nee-a-see hee-a-sash" in the fond belief that it was the language used by carnival and circus people who wished to keep their conversation from being understood by the marks.

My reason for writing this little essay is threefold:

- 1) Did you ever hear of this language?
- 2) Was it or is it used by carnival people?
- 3) If not, what is its origin?

Thee-a-sank yee-a-soo.